

Chess Stamps (1947-1969)

by Bill Wall

Stamp collecting is probably the most popular hobby in the world, with over 35 million people collecting stamps. Stamps with a chess theme are popular among collectors and chess enthusiasts.

For a little history on stamps, the world's first adhesive postage stamp used in a public postal system, the Penny Black, was issued by Britain in 1840 and pictured a young Queen Victoria. On January 10, 1840, Sir Rowland Hill (1795-1879) of London introduced the Penny Black or Penny Post. Individuals could now afford to play correspondence chess. Prior to the postage stamp, letters were sent and it was the person who received the letter that had to pay. The receiver then had to pay a cost that was dependent on the distance the letter had to travel. When the postage stamp was introduced, the sender if a letter prepaid his postage according to weight and not distance. In two months after the introduction of the postage stamp, there was a steep increase in the number of correspondence chess games.



On July 6, 1919, the German city of Soerup-in-Angeln (St. Marienkirche) issued paper money with a chess motif. It had a chess table with a woman seated. Paper money replaced coins, which became rare in Germany since metal was being used for armaments.

Zeit einen Monat nach öffentlicher Bekanntmachung in

DER KAMPF ANGELNS UM SEIN DEUTSCHTUM
*Angler Deputation bei König Friedrich VII
im Schloß zu Glücksburg. 1850-1864*

*Der König:
Bist Du Peter Otzen?
Dann ist unsere Audienz
beendet.*

*Der Amtsvorsteher:
Aug. Hansen
No 33230*

NOTSCHAFT DES AMTSBEZIRKS SÖRUP IN ANGELN



**Not-
Schein**

Holtz

1 Mark

**Sörup
in Angeln**

1460
DAT SE BLIWEN
EWICH TOSAMENDE
VNGEDEL

**Gründung des Schleswig-Holsteiner Bundes
Sörup in Angeln den 6. Juli 1919**

Aug. Westphalen, Flensburg.



In mid-1921 Stroebeck, Germany issued paper money (chess money) with a chess motif. The city issued three bank notes (25, 50, and 75 pfennigs) which told the history of the village's chess tradition.



In 1923, the first chess postmark or cancellation (not stamp) was used by the Post Office at Borstendorf, Germany to advertise the local manufacture of chess sets.



In 1927, the earliest postmark to commemorate a chess event was in Kecskemet, Hungary. Stamps were cancelled with the words SAKK (chess). The postmark commemorated an international tournament in Kecskemet, Hungary from Jun 25 to July 12, 1927.



In 1933, a special postmark was issued in Berlin that said, "Visit chess clubs everywhere, at 8:00 PM on 22nd, 24th and 28th of May.



In 1933, the Czechoslovak Chess Championship was held in Mnichovo Hradiste, Czechslovakia. A chess postmark was used to cancel stamps.



In 1935, the 6th Chess Olympiad was held in Warsaw from August 16, 1935 to August 31, 1935. A special cancel was used to commemorate the event.



In 1936, an international chess tournament was held in Moscow from May 14, 1936, to June 8, 1936. A chess postmark was used to cancel stamps.



In 1936, an unofficial Chess Olympiad took place in Munich between August 17, 1936 and September 1, 1936. A chess postmark was used to cancel stamps.



On September 29, 1947, the first postage stamp (Scott: 580) with a chess theme was issued in Bulgaria. It was one of five issued to commemorate the 1947 Balkan Games, held in Sofia, Bulgaria on November 2-5, 1947. Chess was one of the sports depicted on the commemorative stamps. The other four stamps portrayed bicycle racing, basketball, soccer, and the flags of the participating nations (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia). Hungary won the chess competition. The stamp (9 leva, white and orange brown) showed a knight with the vertical inscription 'Balkan Games 1947' and horizontal inscription 'Republic of Bulgaria.' The stamp was designed by St. Kancer, with assistance from Hungarian grandmaster Gideon Barcza (1911-1986), and 172,000 were issued. A first day cover was also issued of a brown knight.



On November 20, 1948, three chess stamps were issued in the USSR to commemorate the 18th World Chess Championship match-tournament, held in The Hague, Netherlands, from March 1-25, and in Moscow, from April 10-18, 1948. The inscription on the stamps reads: Tournament Match for the World Chess Championship, Moscow 1948. The blue 30 kopek stamp (Scott: 1299, Michel: 1292) shows the House of Unions, where the second half of the match was held in Moscow. The violet 40 kopeck stamp (Scott: 1300, Michel: 1293) shows the chess player's badge with a chess board and rook. The brown 50 kopeck stamp (Scott: 1301, Michel: 1294) shows the House of Unions.





On April 9, 1950, three stamps (Scott: 889-890, C69) were issued in Hungary (Magyar) to commemorate the first Candidates Tournament, held in Budapest, Hungary from April 9 to May 16, 1950. .



On August 20, 1950, five stamps (Scott: 300-304) were issued in Yugoslavia to commemorate the 9th Chess Olympiad, held in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia from August 20 to September 9, 1950. This was the first Chess Olympiad after World War II. This was the first Chess Olympiad commemorated by a special stamp issue. The stamps were designed by J. Trpin and O. Antonini, and printed by Courvoisier. The stamp values were 2, 3, 5, 10, and 20 Dinars. One of the stamps (5 dinar stamp) shows incorrectly a position from the game Capablanca-Lasker, New York 1924. Lasker's bishop should be on the g8 square and not the f8 square. The position is after White's 39th move.





Capablanca - Lasker, New York 1924, 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 cxd5 5. Nf3 Nc6 6. Bf4 e6 7. e3 Be7 8. Bd3 O-O 9. O-O Nh5 10. Be5 f5 11. Rc1 Nf6 12. Bxf6 gxf6 13. Nh4 Kh8 14. f4 Rg8 15. Rf3 Bd7 16. Rh3 Be8 17. a3 Rg7 18. Rg3 Rxd3 19. hxd3 Rc8 20. Kf2 Na5 21. Qf3 Nc4 22. Qe2 Nd6 23. Rh1 Ne4+ 24. Bxe4 fxe4 25. Qg4 f5 26. Nxf5 exf5 27. Qxf5 h5 28. g4 Rc6 29. g5 Kg8 30. Nxd5 Bf7 31. Nxe7+ Qxe7 32. g4 hxg4 33. Qh7+ Kf8 34. Rh6 Bg8 35. Qf5+ Kg7 36. Rxc6 bxc6 37. Kg3 Qe6 38. Kxg4 Qxf5+ 39. Kxf5 (the position on the 5-dinar stamp, but with the Black bishop of f8 instead of g8) Bd5 40. b4 a6 41. Kg4 Bc4 42. f5 Bb3 43. Kf4 Bc2 44. Ke5 Kf7 45. a4 Kg7 46. d5 Bxa4 47. d6 c5 48. bxc5 Bc6 49. Ke6 a5 50. f6+ 1-0

On November 1, 1951, seven stamps (Scott: 463-465, C44-46, E14) were issued in Cuba as part of the 30th anniversary of Jose Capablanca winning the world chess championship from Emanuel Lasker in 1921. This was the first portrayal of a chess player (Capablanca) on a stamp. Two stamps of Capablanca are based on a portrait by the Cuban artist E. Valderrama, and two stamps are from a photograph of Capablanca taken in 1941. One stamp shows the final position of the last game of the world championship match, 1921. In some stamp runs, there was a print error on one of the stamps (the 8 cent stamp), spelling "JOSF" instead of "JOSE." The Capablanca commemorative stamps outsold any previous issue in Cuba's postal history except for a Roosevelt stamp. The stamps were printed by Waterlow & Sons. (*Chess Life*, August 5, 1955).



On May 15, 1952, the USSR issued a 40-kopeck stamp (Scott: 1626; Michel: 1629; Yvert: 1612; Domfil: 952.15) depicting two players playing chess at a recreation center. The stamp commemorated the 15th anniversary of the Stalin Constitution. The scene was supposed to depict Article 119 of the Stalin Constitution, the right to rest and leisure.



On August 10, 1952, a stamp (Scott: 308) was issued in Finland to commemorate the 10th Chess Olympiad, held in Helsinki from August 10-31, 1952. The stamp, designed by B. Ekholm, depicted a rook, knight, and chessboard. They also issued a First Day Cover (FDC) postcard, with the postmark in Finnish and German.



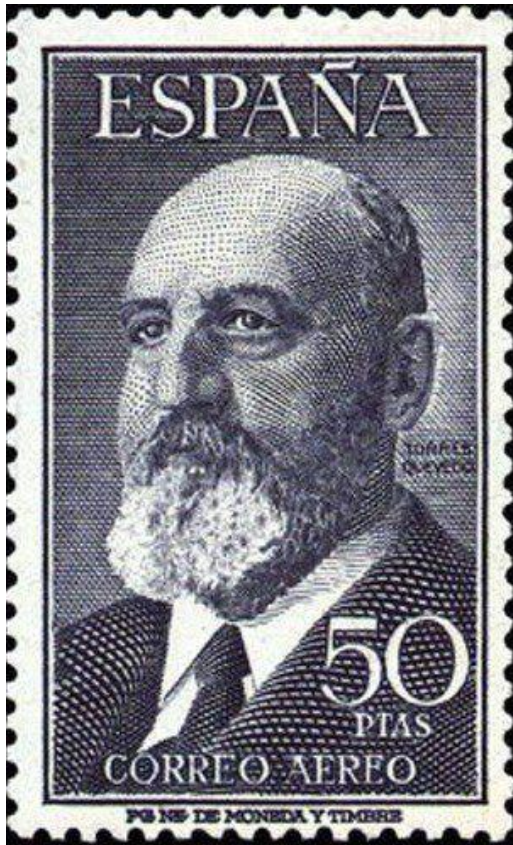
On April 4, 1953, Hungary issued a stamp (Michel: 1298) perhaps depicting chess play at a recreation home or health resort in Hungary.



In 1955, China issued a stamp depicting Chinese chess.



In 1955, Spain issued a stamp celebrating engineer and mathematician Leonardo Torres Quevedo, the creator of a Spanish chess-playing mechanical device.



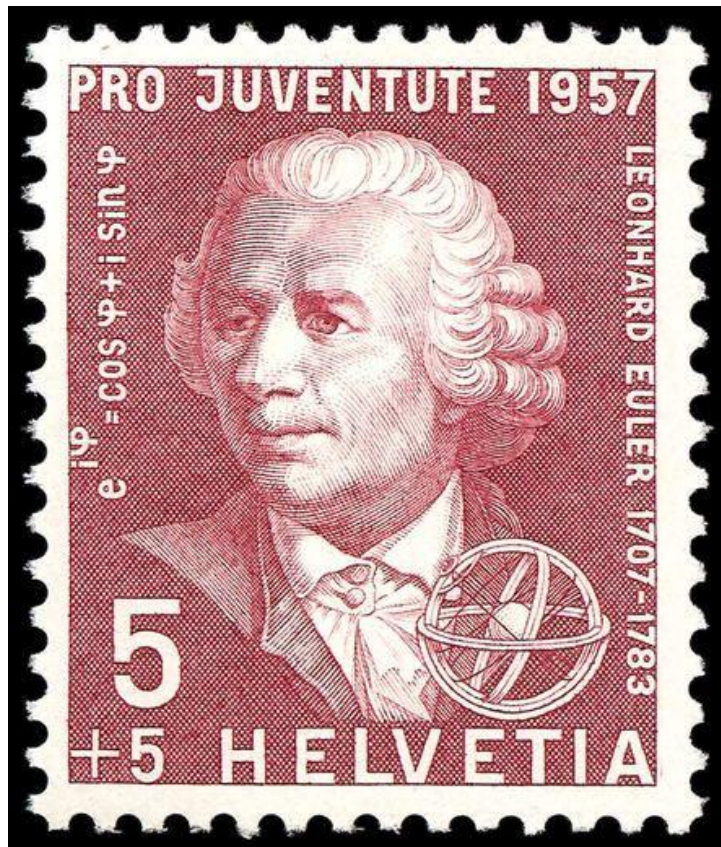
On February 9, 1956, Poland issued two chess stamps to commemorate the first Deaf and Dumb chess championship, held in Warsaw from February 9 to 23, 1956. The red 40 groszy stamp (Scott: 717) is of a chess rook and hands. The blue 60 groszy stamp (Scott: 718) is a chess knight and hands.



On April 15, 1957 the USSR issued a stamp depicting Leonard Euler (1707-1783) who worked on the mathematics of the Knight's Tour.



On November 30, 1957 Switzerland issued a stamp depicting Leonard Euler (1707-1783) who worked on the mathematics of the Knight's Tour.



In 1957, David Lawson (1886-1980) made an effort to get a Morphy chess stamp to celebrate Morphy's 100 anniversary of winning the first American Chess Congress. The postal service was not interested.

On July 17, 1958 Bulgaria issued a chess stamp to commemorate the 5th World Students' Team Championships in Varna on July 5-20, 1958. A mistake was made on one of the rooks, depicting an extra window tower.





On August 30, 1958, the USSR issued a stamp (Scott: 2107, Michel: 2137, Gibbons: 2249) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Mikhail I. Chigorin's death (1850-1908). Its value was 40 Kopecks. The stamp was designed by Tchutschelov.



On September 29, 1959 China issued a stamp depicting Chinese chess.

On September 19, 1960, East Germany (DDR) issued 3 stamps to commemorate the 14th Chess Olympiad in Leipzig. The stamps feature the FIDE Congress emblem and a Rook, a Knight, and a Bishop.





On May 2, 1962 the Netherlands Antilles issued three stamps to commemorate the 5th International Candidates Tournament at Curacao in the Netherlands Antilles.



On July 7, 1962 Bulgaria issued a set of 5 stamps and a souvenir sheet (Scott: 1225-1229, 1229a) to commemorate the 15th Chess Olympiad in Varna on September 15 to October 10, 1962. The stamps depicted chess pieces except the king. The values of the stamps were 1, 2, 3, 13, and 20 stotinki and printed by the State Printing Works.



On July 25, 1962, Cuba issued a chess stamp depicting a boy playing chess.



On November 21, 1962 the USSR issued a chess stamp to commemorate the 30th Soviet Championship in Yerevan, from November 21 to December 20, 1962. The stamp value is 4 kopecs. The stamp depicts 3 chess pieces.



On December 30, 1962, the Philippines issued a stamp of Dr. Jose Rizal (1861-1896), a Filipino nationalist and polymath, playing chess.



On May 18, 1963 the USSR issued three stamps to commemorate the 25th World Championship match being played in Moscow from March 22 to May 20, 1963. The 4-kopeck stamp (Scott: 2742a, Michel: 2763B) depicts a king and pawn. The 6-kopeck stamp (Scott: 2743a, Michel: 2764B) depicts a queen and bishop. The 16-kopeck stamp (Scott: 2744a, Michel: 2765B) depicts a rook and knight.



On July 5, 1963 Ceylon issued a chess stamp depicting people playing chess.

On December 12, 1963 Nicaragua issued a stamp (Michel: 1343) depicting a yellow knight and green over a chessboard.



On November 2, 1964 Israel issued two chess stamps to commemorate the 16th Chess Olympiad in Tel Aviv. Both stamps feature a chess board and the emblem of the Chess Olympics; one stamp additionally depicts a knight, the other a stylized rook. Some of the stamps had some printing errors. The 0.12 stamp had a brown spot in one of the rings. The 0.70 stamp had a green blotch in the rook.



On August 28, 1965, San Marino issued a 200 lira stamp (Scott: 621). It was a chess board with 10 rooks in 5 different colors and EUROPA written on the stamp, to commemorate a unified Europe. The design was called "Castles on a chessboard." It was the first chess stamp not to honor a chess event or chess player. The stamp was designed by C. Manciola and printed by the Italian State Printing Works. One sheet of 40 stamps was printed with the red rook upside down. These inverted red rook stamps are valued at over \$12,000.



On December 30, 1965 the Philippines issued a stamp depicting Dr. Jose Rizal (1861-1896), a Filipino nationalist and polymath, playing chess. It had the words Marcos-Lopez, Inauguration, Dec. 30, 1965, written over the stamp.



In 1965, the Egyptian Occupation of Palestine (UAR) issued a stamp depicting the old game of senet.



In 1965, Spain issued 4 stamps of famous persons. One of the persons was King Alfonso X, a patron of chess.



On February 25, 1966, Romania issued 6 stamps (Scott: 1815-1820) to commemorate the 17th Chess Olympiad in Havana. All stamps in the set have a chessboard as a central design theme; the stamps additionally feature a pawn and Chess Olympiad emblem, a jester in front of a queen, and a knight on horseback in front of a rook.



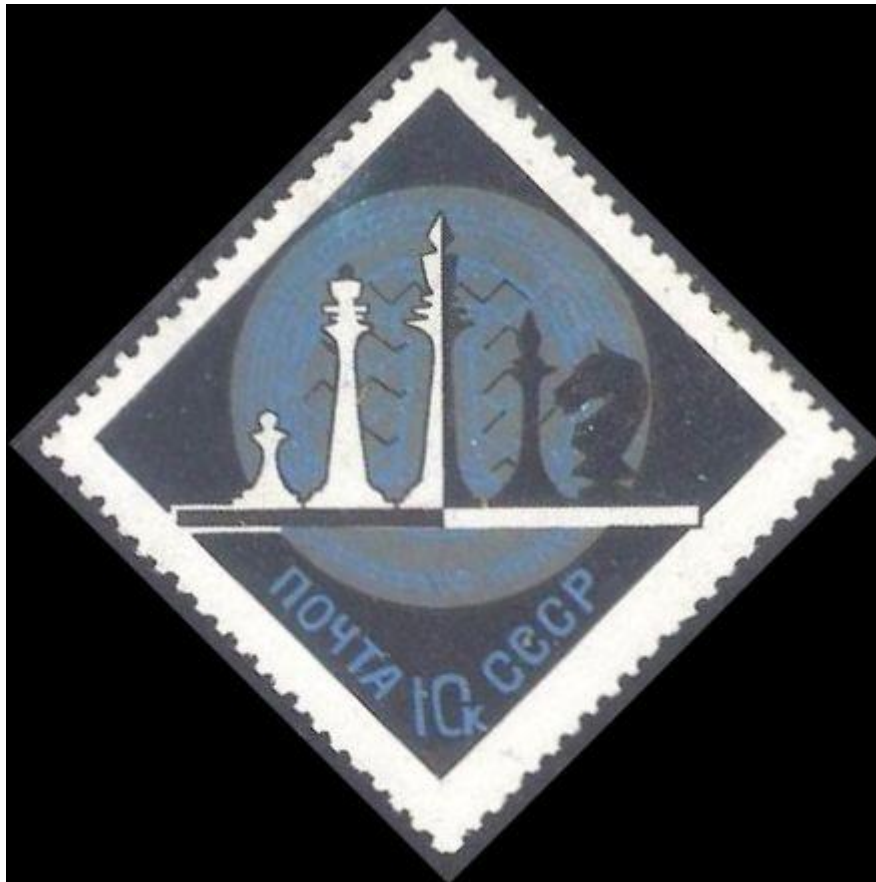
On April 2, 1966 France issued its first chess stamp, designed by Clemant Serveau, to commemorate an International Chess Festival at Le Havre. It depicts a chessboard and a knight with the symbols of a king and queen at the top corners of the stamp.



On May 31 and July 26, 1966, the USSR issued a stamp to commemorate the 26th World Championship match in Moscow, from April 11 to June 8, 1966, between Petrosian and Spassky. The 6-kopeck brown stamp (Scott: 3215, Michel: 3225) depicts a king and pawn with a gold medal.



In 1966, the USSR issued a souvenir sheet (Scott: 3232, Michel: B143), which included a 10-kopeck stamp with chess pieces on a board.



On October 18, 1966, Cuba issued 6 stamps (Gibbons: 1405-1411) and a First Day Cover (FDC) to commemorate the 17th Chess Olympiad in Havana. The stamps had stylized chess pieces.

The 10c stamp has a stylized queen and also depicts a giant simultaneous exhibition. As souvenir sheet was also issued. It depicts the board position of Lasker-Capablanca, Berlin 1914.





On March 24, 1967 (issued April 28) Monaco issued a stamp (Scott: 664) to commemorate the 1st International Chess Grand Prix (March 10 – April 1) in Monaco, under the patronage of Prince Rainier. The stamp depicted a chessboard, a few pieces, and a view of the Monte Carlo harbor. The stamp value was 60 Centimes. The stamp was designed by B. Minne and engraved by Monvoisen.



On April 10, 1967 Czechoslovakia issued a chess stamp for Expo 67 depicting ceramic chess dolls.



On June 23, 1967 the Dominican Republic issued 2 chess stamps to commemorate the 5th Central American Championship.



On November 4, 1967 Yemen issued a set of 8 stamps commemorating Moorish art. One stamp (Gibbon: R346) depicts a miniature painting from the Alfonsso manuscript, published in 1283. The painting is of a chessboard in a tent with two players.



On November 27, 1967 East Germany (DDR) issued a chess stamp depicting King Drosselbart and his Queen standing on top of a chess board.



On March 14, 1968 Switzerland issued a chess stamp to commemorate the 18th Chess Olympiad in Lugano. It depicts a blue rook.



On July 17, 1968 East Germany issued a chess stamp. It had a picture of Emanuel Lasker (1868-1941) and commemorated his 100th birthday. It also issued a FDC for that date.



On July 29, 1969 East Germany issued a chess stamp to commemorate the 16th World Students Team Championship.



On November 15, 1969 Cuba issued a set of 6 sports stamps. One of them, the 30 cent stamp (Gibbons: 1706), commemorated the 6th Capablanca Memorial Tournament (held in 1968). The stamp depicts a globe and one each of the 6 chess pieces. The stamp was designed by R.G. Parra.

